

Appl. No: 09/987,551

Reply to Office Action of May 7, 2003

Remarks

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully request entry of this amendment, as the amendment places the application in clear condition for allowance, or alternatively places the application in better form for appeal. Specifically, Applicants have canceled claims to moot a rejection in view of an applied reference, and have amended the remaining claims to overcome the outstanding rejection in view of another applied reference. Upon entry of this response, Claims 3-6 and 9-17 are pending in the application; Claims 1, 2, 7, 8, and 18-20 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and Claims 3-5 and 9-11 having been amended.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 3-7, 9-13, and 15-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Publication No. 2-278206 to Tanji et al. (Tanji). Claims 1, 2, 7, 8, and 18-20 appear to have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Publication No. 1-310305 to Aizawa et al. (Aizawa).¹ The status of Claim 14 is unclear from the Office Action.² Applicants respectfully assert that the rejections of the claims have been overcome for the following reasons.

¹ The Office Action states, on page 6, line 4, that "Claims 1, 2, 7, 8, 13, 14, and 18-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over . . . Aizawa" (Underlining added). However, Applicants respectfully assert that dependent Claims 13 and 14 depend from dependent Claim 11, which was not indicated as rejected over Aizawa. Thus, the rejection over Aizawa is understood not to apply to dependent Claims 13 and 14.

² As discussed above with respect to the rejection over Aizawa, dependent Claim 14 does not appear to have been rejected. Further, dependent Claim 14 has not been rejected in view of Tanji. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider withdrawing the finality of the outstanding Office Action and issuing a further Patent Office communication that clearly sets forth the status of each of the remaining claims.

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As stated above, Claims 3-5 and 9-11 have been amended so as to be in independent form, and to recite differing features of the invention. Applicants respectfully assert that support for the changes to the claims is self-evident from the originally filed disclosure, including the original claims, and that therefore no new matter has been added.

The present invention is directed to branching methods for an optical fiber cable containing a plurality of plastic optical fibers. Independent Claims 3-5 and 9-11 each recite removing a covering of the cable at a single portion of the cable, and cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion without cutting the cable in its entirety, at a non-terminal position of the cable, to form a terminal of the fiber.

Regarding the rejection of independent Claims 3-5 and 9-11, Tanji is directed to a branching method for optical fiber cables. As shown in Figures 1(a) and (b), for example, of Tanji, and as stated in the English language abstract, a cable sheath 4 is eliminated at a B point separated from an A point. At the B point, the optical fiber to be allowed to branch is cut, and from the point A, the optical fiber 1 is drawn out. By this arrangement, the optical fiber 1 is allowed to branch at the A point.

However, Applicants respectfully assert that Tanji does not teach or suggest the claimed features of removing a covering of a cable at a single portion of the cable, and cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion, as recited in independent Claims 3-5 and 9-11. Rather, Tanji shows that the cable sheath 4 is eliminated at a B point separated from an A point, where the optical fiber 1 is cut at the B point, and the cut optical fiber 1 is drawn out at the A point.

Specifically, independent Claims 3-5 and 9-11 each recite "removing a covering of the cable at a single portion of the cable . . . [,] and cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion." Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the

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rejection of independent Claims 3-5 and 9-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn and the independent claims allowed.

Remaining dependent Claims 6 and 12-17 depend from independent Claims 5 and 11, respectively, and are therefore also allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend, as well as for their own features. Thus, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of dependent Claims 6 and 12-17.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 3-6 and 9-17 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.



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Respectfully submitted,

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